

increasingly sick society, readily recognizable as such by the rapid deterioration of its economic and industrial indices and confirmed by the biological indices." Among the "economic and industrial indices" are included poor working output, absenteeism, and high sickness rates as expressions of neurosis, while repeated strikes and "the rise of leadership for destruction" are considered to be political expressions of social fragmentation. The birth-rate and the incidence of psychosomatic affections make up the "biological indices." "Cultural indices" include the decline of religious faith, and mass increase in gambling and attendance at games. Among the cultural indices are also listed "increasing intrusions of manifestations of the primitive and visceral including sex," and "increasing intellectualism and obsessional planning." In reading Halliday's ensuing discussion of these cultural indices in terms of art and religion it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he regards departure from the æsthetic and religious standards in which he believes as tantamount to decadence.

The first part of the book is concerned with the problem of causation, the second with psychosomatic affections and the third with the sick society. Although there is not a little repetition, Dr. Halliday's fervour and zeal for reform, i.e. social therapeutics, carry the reader forwards, even when he is critical of the argument. Dr. Halliday has the gift also of translating into simple language the psychoanalytic concepts which he has found so helpful.

H. L.

## MARRIAGE GUIDANCE

**Mace, David R.** *Marriage Counseling*. London, 1948. J. and A. Churchill. Pp. 167. Price 8s.

IN February 1947 the Denning Committee urged the Government to make grants-in-aid to reputable bodies undertaking marriage guidance work. The Home Secretary thereupon set up a Departmental Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Sidney Harris

to consider how the grants should be administered and how a nation-wide Marriage Guidance Service should be developed. This latter committee has now completed its deliberations and a report is about to be published.

The publication of this book is therefore timely as it enables the general reader to fill in part of the background of the comparatively recent development of applied sociology usually referred to as marriage guidance. In his charmingly personal preface Dr. Mace disarms criticisms that would otherwise have to be made since he strictly delimits the scope to that of a fairly full account of the remedial work of the Marriage Guidance Council; and since he wrote the manuscript in the course of outward and return Atlantic voyages one understands the absence of formal references to other literature.

The chapters are logically arranged, since the first one shows the need for the service; subsequently a centre and its staffing are described together with the sketching-in of an imaginary yet typical case history; and finally the methods of selecting and of training counsellors are given. Chapters 8 and 10 summarize cogently the diagnosis and treatment of marital disharmony and a useful classification of both is given. Thus a differentiation between two stages of disharmony is made: the early stage when the couple become aware of tension (which they try to lessen) and a later chronic stage (into which the former passes if unresolved) in which the will to co-operate has gone and one or the other no longer wishes to heal the breach. Treatment is divided into catharsis, elucidation and mediation, and it is not usually complete until all three stages have been reached: Mace rightly deplores the activities of the well-meaning friend who listens sympathetically to the outpourings at the cathartic stage but does not realize that to attempt to state the case is not sufficient to release the tension.

It is unfortunate in a book describing an art whose exponents must be able to exercise the highest degree of detachment that subjective expressions of opinion should so often be made. For example, is it reasonable

to refer on page 26 to "the people most worth helping"?—surely an advisor should refrain from considering degrees of worth among those who seek his help. Further not everyone would agree that no ground for objection can be seen in artificial insemination if the donor is the husband. Unless the trend of eugenic theory is ignored, one must be wary in many cases in which A.I.H. might perpetuate an inherent reproductive weakness.

In the course of his work a marriage counsellor may be asked for help on general sex problems by unmarried people. These young people may be troubled about the ethics of premarital sex relations; a young man may be worried about the possibility of infection by venereal disease; a young woman may fear herself pregnant. Sometimes a couple under age may ask advice, but the refusal of a parent to allow them to marry and all these problems may be solved by discussion with one whose opinion is respected.

"The really constructive function of counselling is not to enable married people to avoid the worst but to enable them creatively to achieve the best in their life together." The writer explains the opportunities that arise to achieve this when a young couple desire preparation for marriage. He emphasises the need for the medical examination and inquiry on the lines of the schedules prepared by the *Eugenics Society*. In some cases the best time for the couple to learn about marriage and family living is in the first few months of married life.

As a history of the London Marriage Guidance Centre up to date this book can be recommended; and as a description of marriage guidance it can be read with profit, with the reservations referred to above. There is a fairly full index and four useful appendices describe the work of the Centre, and a summary of the case records of the first thousand couples dealt with by personal interviewers.

D. ROBERTSON-RITCHIE.

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